

**ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW  
#292**

**HERBERT STATLER LOUDEN  
USS *SOLACE*, SURVIVOR**

**INTERVIEWED ON  
DECEMBER 7, 1998  
BY JEFF PAPPAS**

TRANSCRIBED BY:

CARA KIMURA

OCTOBER 21, 2001

**USS *ARIZONA* MEMORIAL  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  
ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION**

**Jeff Pappas (JP):** I'm sorry.

(Conversation off-mike)

JP: That's okay. All right.

The following oral history interview was conducted by Jeff Pappas for the National Park Service, USS *Arizona* Memorial at the Imperial Palace Hotel in Las Vegas, Nevada on December 7, 1998 at twelve noon. The person being interviewed is Herbert S. Loudon, who was on the USS *Solace* on December 7, 1941. Herbert, for the record, would you please state your full name, your place and date of birth?

**Herbert Loudon (HL):** My full name is Herbert S., Statler, Loudon. Date of birth, November 7, 1917—that's the day the Communistic government of Russia took power—at Kalamazoo, Michigan.

JP: Very good. So, did you grow up in Michigan? You spent most of your childhood there?

HL: I grew up in Michigan, yes. Most of my childhood was spent in Kalamazoo until we went to the farm, out near Fulton, Michigan. Then I went to high school in Climax, Michigan, but it's all in the same area.

JP: It's all in the same, it's all in the Kalamazoo...

HL: Yes.

JP: ...area there. So you basically spent your entire childhood growing up in Michigan. Tell me a little bit about your father and mother, their full names, what they did, their vocations.

HL: Yes, my father's name was Orvy Johnson Louden. And it's rather interesting that as I say Orvy Johnson, he used to go by O. J. Louden. His name actually was Johnson. He was unofficially adopted about a hundred years ago and in those days the adopted people felt bad because they were adopted and he was adopted by his uncle, unofficially. Took his uncle's name, which was Louden, and got married under that name and all we kids were born under the name of Louden.

JP: Good.

HL: My mother's name was Parmeley Alice, Mary Parmeley. And she was from Alamo, Michigan.

JP: Can you spell her last name for me?

HL: P-A-R-M-E-L-E-Y. And she was three-quarter Indian.

JP: What...

HL: Well, she used to tell me it was the SKEE tribe, but that I could never find anything about. I think it was the Sioux. But I'm not sure on that. But she was very proud of the fact that she was Indian, so I guess you're talking to an Indian now.

JP: Did you have any brothers or sisters, growing up?

HL: Oh yes. I had two older brothers and two younger sisters. John and Clell, sisters, LaVanchia and Mary Emma.

JP: Tell me a little about your high school days. What did you like—did you play sports? Were you involved in any of the activities at school?

HL: Yes, I went to high school at Climax, Michigan and I was involved in track. I did a lot of running and jumping and so forth. And I trained because I was seven and a half miles one way from home and eight miles another way from home. And you used to—I never was tardy and absent during my high school days in Michigan. I can tell you the snow one time was deep enough, you [*had to*] go across the fields to get there. And you could touch the power poles, power lines.

JP: What did your dad do for a living? How did he support the family?

HL: My dad was a machinist. He was a millwright machinist and worked at a Kalamazoo paper mill in Kalamazoo, Michigan. [*He*] did a lot of machine shop work there, ran all their big lathes and tools. He was called back into the service during the war, at which time he went to CART machine shop in Battle Creek, Michigan. He had left Kalamazoo with the family to take us to a farm [*where*] we lived near Fulton, Michigan.

JP: Mm-hm, mm-hm. Did you work during high school?

HL: Yes, I did. I had different jobs. I used to sell nursery stock in the wintertime to all the dear old ladies around Climax; it was such a small town. When I delivered in the springtime, they'd call me up and I'd have to plant it for them. So there was the Rochester Nursery, and they were very nice to me. They paid me a good twenty-five percent commission on it. I ran a trap route that I used to run at night and trapped furs.

JP: Tell me about your school days. Were you a good student or a bad student?

HL: Oh boy. Now he's trying to get me to lie. No, I was third in my class, but I have to admit that the class was rather small. There was only thirteen of us in my class in high school.

JP: That's still top twenty-five percent though.

HL: Well, it was hard. There was one girl [*who*] was so smart, but I never could, keep up with her.

JP: Anyone ever talk about college back then? This is in the midst of depression, of course. This is the early 1930's that you had gone to high school. Was your family affected by the depression? Were you aware of what was going on in the country?

HL: Yes, we were very much aware of it. Even though we were on a farm, we ate potatoes three times a day for a long, long time. And used to— [*have*] to save your wheat harvest to pay your taxes and keep from losing your farm so we felt the depression during those days.

JP: Was your father still working as a machinist at this time? Or was he on the family farm?

HL: No, that time he was farming at that time.

JP: So had you bought a family farm?

HL: They bought the family farm, yes.

JP: So your dad decided to get out of the machine business?

HL: Well, he did and [*was*] called back in during the wartime.

JP: Very good, okay. So you graduated in, let's see, it would be 1934, 1935?

HL: I graduated 1936, I think it was May.

JP: Okay.

HL: Boy, you ask me questions that my old age can't keep up with.

JP: That's okay. You're doing very well. Was there ever talk about going to college back then in your family?

HL: Yes there was. No one in my family went to college. I didn't go to college until I was gainfully employed and then I went to different trade schools and also into college late year in life. But my dad was an eighth grade self-made man and both my brothers were [*too*]. My older sister was a machinist. The whole family were machinists.

JP: Wow, interesting. So at 1936 then, had you considered at that point service, military service?

HL: In 1936 I had not considered it The draft came [*while*] I was living in Kalamazoo, Michigan and we had to register, [*that*] I considered it. At that time, I registered like all the other young fellows [*did*] my aunt called me for—she lived in Kalamazoo—and asked me to her home for dinner. She said that she wished that if I went into the service, that I would get in the medical department. Well at the time, I was running the first aid station for the Sutherland Paper Company in Kalamazoo. I had had two standard, two advanced courses and a state police course in first aid. I went to the navy and they gave me a third class pharmacist mate rating, which was rather a nice rating. That way I [*could*] follow through with some of the training I had.

JP: So you had spent most of your time between 1936, after graduating from high school, and then to the draft. The draft was initiated in 1939, I believe.

HL: I think we registered [*in*] '39 and then they—wait a minute. May have been '40 because I went into the navy—I can't even tell you the day I went into the navy. It was in 1941, early.

JP: Okay. So you'd spent quite a bit of your time in between high school and the navy, learning some medical skills?

HL: I learned more of it the hard way, after I got in the navy. But [*I*] had some experience before I went in the navy.

JP: Okay. So when did you—remember when you were drafted? Were you drafted or did you enlist?

HL: No, I enlisted in the navy rather than be drafted.

JP: Why was that? What was the choice? Why the navy?

HL: Well, because I was able to get this pharmacist mate, third class, petty officer rating.

JP: Right.

HL: Which paid a few dollars more a month and I was, had the choice of the type of service I wanted to render.

JP: Mm-hm. You're landlocked up there in Michigan. Did you spend any time over at the Lakes region?

HL: No, no. No, I went into the navy at Great Lakes, but because of my rating of third class, I was transferred to the East Coast to be attached to the USS *Solace*—which was being built at that time. It was being converted from the SS *Iroquois* to the USS *Solace*. I went from Great Lakes directly to the east.

JP: Very good. Was the *Solace*, was that in New London, or when you joined the *Solace*?

HL: I joined it while I was at Brooklyn Navy Yard.

JP: Very good.

HL: Yeah.

JP: How long did you spend there, in Brooklyn, at the navy yard?

HL: Oh, we were there, I can't tell you. It seemed like [*I was*] there until—I joined in June, I think it was, and we were there on the *Solace* until it left—oh boy. Trying to think when it went to sea. It was commissioned back there. We put it—we're called plank owners. In 1941, I think, we started out with it, yes.

JP: So in June of, or during the summer of 1941.

HL: I would say that was about it.

JP: Tell me a little bit about your duties on the *Solace*.

HL: Well, I was a pharmacist mate third class, I had different duties on the *Solace*. [*You were*] transferred you around from one station to another. You stayed about three months on a station and then you went on to another one. And at the time of Pearl Harbor, I was in medical ward number two. [*I was classified*] as a senior corpsman, in dressing, I guess, because we did a lot of work with wounds and dressing and so forth.

JP: Tell me a little bit about the *Solace*, the ship itself, the crew, what kind of ship it was.



HL: It had been the SS *Iroquois*, owned by the Clyde Mallory [*Steamship Company*] line, sold to the navy because they had gotten—part of their East Coast because of submarines and recommissioned there as a hospital ship. We had around 435 beds, I think it was. The *Solace* was equipped like a small hospital, with all the operating rooms, laboratories, eye-ear-nose-and-throat, everything that you'd [*have*] in a hospital, we had it aboard the *Solace*. In fact it was the only, the first [*naval hospital*] ship in the Pacific Theater in the beginning of the war.

JP: Interesting. Now at that time, in June, December of '41, the war of course in Europe was happening. The battles in North Atlantic had occurred.

HL: Yes.

JP: Was there talk, chatter between you and your colleagues about perhaps fighting in the European Theater at that time?

HL: No, not at that time. It appeared that we were assigned to the Pacific Fleet, right from the beginning, because after we took our shakedown cruise on the East Coast, we went right on down through the Panama Canal up to San Diego and out to Pearl Harbor.

JP: Okay. And when did you arrive at Pearl?

HL: Boy, I wish I'd remember that. We arrived there—I believe it was in September.

JP: Of '41, 1941.

HL: [*19*]41, yes.

JP: Now, you're a Michigan guy, born and raised, trained there and then on the East Coast and Brooklyn. You arrived at

this paradise, this wonderful place, Hawaii. What did you think of it?

HL: Well, we did think it was quite a place to be. One of the most beautiful areas in the world. The climate, one of the most ideal climates in the world. The people themselves we thought were fine.

JP: The Hawaiians or other...

HL: Well, the Hawaiians and of course at that time there were fewer of other than Hawaiians there, but they were fine too. And we thoroughly enjoyed it. We saw, on liberty, as much of the island as we could, up until it got too busy.

JP: But do you remember anything specific about Hawaii, a favorite place or favorite activity that you liked to do?

HL: Yes, I remember walking up to Pali, P-A-L-I, I think it is, it's overlooking a big cliff and the wind blows terrifically hard there. I was quite amazed because in 1941, I took a bus tour and they traveled about thirteen miles before they got there and I said, "Boy, this doesn't seem right."

I'd been [*there*] before and the fellow says, "Well, we took the roundabout way to get up here. You walked up here from Pearl Harbor, which is only a few miles."

JP: So that's what you remember.

HL: But I remember the flowers, the palm trees. Everything seemed to be beautiful and.

JP: Mm-hm. So this is now in September of 1941 though, only looking at maybe less than two and a half months, two months before the attack. Of course the Japanese at that time were, had been negotiating with the Americans in

Washington and elsewhere. There had been some rumors and talks about a potential conflict in the Southeast, Southeast Asia, in the Pacific. How aware were you and your crew in regards to that?

HL: We were not aware of it to speak of. We knew that we were attached to the Pacific Fleet and we knew that we were out there to service the Pacific Fleet and that's why we were at Pearl Harbor. We were to follow the Pacific Fleet wherever it went, as much as we could. And but we didn't even know they were going to war at that time.

JP: Do you remember the name of the commander?

HL: Beg your pardon?

JP: Do you remember the name of the commander on the *Solace*?

HL: Yes I do. Perlman, Captain Perlman. That's P-E-R-L-M-A-N. And he was a very, very nice. He was a full captain.

JP: Mm-hm.

HL: And then we had quite a crew.

JP: What do you remember about him?

HL: I remember that he was one of the most considerate [*man*] that we ever knew. He was a Jewish man. He worked with—at that time, we had a Protestant chaplain aboard ship. Any time the chaplain wanted a motor launch to go ashore, it was available. Anytime he wanted to conduct a service, it was available.

JP: Were you practicing your religion at that time?

HL: Yes, I was. Yes, I was a Protestant and I had a lot of respect for Charles Dana Christman, who was the first chaplain aboard the ship.

JP: Now which Protestant faith...

HL: He was Protestant, yes.

JP: You, which Protestant faith did you subscribe too?

HL: Oh, I was Heinz variety from Methodist to Baptist and Presbyterian.

JP: (Laughs) Very good. Any of the—in a medical ship like that, how much interaction had there between the officer corps and the enlisted corps? This Captain Perlman, was he a high-profile captain? Did you get to see him often?

HL: Not too often, no. There wasn't too much inter-action. I think there was more after the war started. I think it threw us all together.

JP: Do you remember any of the doctors on ship? Or how many doctors had there been on the *Solace* before Pearl Harbor?

HL: I cannot tell you how many doctors we had, but we had a lot of high-ranking doctors, commanders, lieutenant commanders and I think our lowest-rated doctor might have been a lieutenant. We had a nursing corps. We had thirteen nurses, one chief nurse and she had twelve nurses. We had—I can't tell you for sure how many pharmacist mates but we—we were called pharmacist mates in those days.

JP: What was the typical day for a pharmacist mate?

HL: We did have a few patients aboard the ship before the war and actually it was a matter of taking care of them. A

pharmacist mate could be a specialist in one of many fields. We had a surgical specialist. We had x-ray technicians. We had pharmacy technicians, eye-ear-nose-and-throat technicians. And all the different operations you [*would*] have on a regular hospital, we had there. The pharmacist mate from third class on up is (chuckles)—I probably shouldn't say this—but he's doing the job that the doctor would be doing if the doctor had enough time to do it.

JP: Right.

HL: He worked alongside of the nurses. Some of my shipmates were surgical technicians, third class pharmacist mates, performing serious surgeries.

JP: What would be the most serious surgery that you'd be allowed to do? And first, what did you do? What did you specialize in?

HL: I was in the medical ward, but I did do a tour of duty in eye-ear-nose-and-throat. And we did debridement of, I think the worst work I got into was the debridement of an eye one time and got so upset over the blood that I passed out. I was also in the special diet kitchen. I took a special course in it. We [*took*] courses in each field we went through and much of my work at Pearl Harbor, was on the medical ward.

JP: Tell me what was the—you said you had to take a special course for each specialization that you were involved in. How long were those courses and how detailed were they?

HL: We would be rated from training. We had a medical corps handbook, which [*was*] our bible. It's a thick book, red, about [*two inches*] thick, it [*had*] everything in it that [*dealt*] with [*medicine*] in any way—pharmacy and hygiene, surgery and x-rays and all these different branches we'd have to study. We [*studied*] to make the next rating.

JP: Mm-hm.

HL: At one time, there [*were*] forty-two of us going up for second class rating. That's the pharmacist mate second class rating.

JP: And these are all forty-two members of the *Solace*?

HL: Forty-two on the *Solace* [*who*] were going all at the same time. They said they didn't intend to rate any of us, so it seemed pretty tough. At that time, there was three of us [*who*] were rated [*second*] class pharmacist mate[s], out of the forty-two, [*third*] class pharmacist mate[s].

JP: Did you need to take an examination for that?

HL: Oh yes. Yes, the examination was a pretty tough examination. Tough enough that I never had to study again for first class pharmacist mate or for chief pharmacist mate.

JP: Wow. So what was your rank then at the time of the attack?

HL: At the time of the attack, I was a third class pharmacist mate.

JP: Tell me about that now. Let's go right to the event. On the morning of the seventh, what were you doing and where was the *Solace* at this time?

HL: The *Solace* was near the end of Ford Island, almost directly off the flight field, near the end of Battleship Row.

JP: The end of Battleship Row heading toward the channel?

HL: Yes.

JP: Pointing that way.

HL: We were on—if you ever look in the map, you'll see one white ship there. That's our ship. Our first [*order*] was to secure all watertight doors when the bombing started and then we were to start out and go after the patients.

JP: Let's go back a bit, about a half an hour before the attack. What were you doing at that time? Where were you?

HL: It was early Sunday morning and I had gone down to my ward early. I thought I'd get some work done so I could go to church services that day. This [*is*] a little testament that I carried with me. That was a navy testament given to us by the Gideons.

JP: Can you hold that out a little bit so Dennis can get a good shot of that? Terrific.

HL: So I had that in my pocket. The reason I tell you about [*this is*] it had quite a bearing on one man [*who*] I talked to later on. While we had a few patients in the ward at that time, they were not serious cases. Some of them [*had*] jungle rot on their feet. These fellows, as soon as the war started, were ready to get out of the bed and see if they could do something.

JP: Well let's stop there for now and change tapes. And then we'll come back, we'll pick up this story.

END OF TAPE #18

TAPE #19

JP: Okay. Okay now let's pick up. At this time, you had told me about some patients that had been on the *Solace* prior to the attack that you were treating them. Let's continue with that.

HL: Yes, these fellows got out of bed and they first said, "What can we do?"

I remember one interesting thing that happened. We sent someone down to the medical supply room and told them to bring back a stack of gauze bandages. These pieces of gauze were cut twelve by twelve. And so when they came back with it, we said we'd like to have you start folding these and we showed them how to fold [*them*.] They were supposed to end up being two-inch gauze bandage.

JP: Now, these were the patients that you were...

HL: These [*were*] patients [*who*] we were using. They were so excited over the bombing and the noises going on that some of those things ended up six by six and four by four and everything else except two by two. (Chuckles) But they weren't the only ones [*who*] were scared, I was too.

JP: I bet, so let's go back there. Now it's 7:30 or so, prior to you had been preparing to go to church services...

HL: Yes.

JP: ...that morning and then the attack. You were in the harbor at the time, were you on deck or were you below deck when the attack had started?

HL: At the time I was aboard ship, not on the deck. I didn't get on deck until we went out to pick up patients. [*When*] you do that, [*you*] take the lower [*deck to*], the liberty launches. The liberty launches become floating ambulances.



JP: Now, the liberty launches are on the *Solace*?

HL: They're on the *Solace*.

JP: So these are portable...

HL: Portable boats. We could bring back in, oh, I suppose as many as twenty or thirty patients at a time with one of those liberty launches. We'd [*picked them up. Some*] went [*on*] to stretchers and [*some*] on the blankets that we used. We broke out a bunch of blankets [*which*] were used as stretchers to carry people [*on*]. They were cream-colored blanket and by the time we got through putting a bunch of fellows [*who were*] soaked with blood and oil on top of them, the blankets were pretty hard to clean.

JP: Now, it was a surprise obviously.

HL: Yes.

JP: It was a fairly quiet, peaceful morning...

HL: Yes, it was.

JP: ...until this happened. Were you completely surprised by this attack, or had you been somewhat prepared for a potential problem with Japan?

HL: We were completely surprised. The *Solace* was prepared to handle patients at any time and that was our duty. I mean, we were just waiting for something to happen, but we didn't know anything was going to happen.

JP: When did it start heating up for you at the *Solace*?

HL: About as soon as the bombing started. You could hear the bombing and see the results of it. Our ship would be

shuddering, rocked from the bombing. Our motor launches went out immediately to pick up patients.

JP: What were you doing? Had you been given orders at that time to go to a particular station?

HL: For a time, I volunteered to go out with a launch and we picked up patients. One of the patients I picked up, [*had a*] rather interesting story. His name was Dean Darrell. Dean Darrell was pulled over the rail, out of the oily water, pretty much unconscious.

JP: Where did he serve?

HL: He was...

JP: Which ship?

HL: Dean was on the [*West Virginia*].

JP: That's okay, we can fill in specifics with the written transcript.

HL: Yes. He was brought over. We pulled him out of the water and at the time, there was one of the planes flying over and shooting at us with a machine gun. Someone yelled, "Duck! They're going to hit us!"

And everyone's trying to duck but this poor guy got hit [*but*] no one knew that he [*was*] hit. He got a bullet in his back. It went through his back and lungs and into his heart. Almost through his heart. He was brought back to our ship, was x-rayed and checked out by [*Robert Ruhl*]

JP: So you were on the liberty launch that picked up Mr. Darrell?

HL: At the time, which was rather interesting because over fifty years later on, I had [a] funeral for him. A beautiful thing happened [to] this man. He was—although he had this seven-millimeter, about one and a half inch bullet in his heart, he lived through it. We couldn't do any surgery at that time, that type of surgery. So he was sent back to Mare Island. And...

JP: So what did you do for Mr. Darrell on the *Solace*, medically?

HL: I did nothing for him at the time on the *Solace*. They x-rayed him, they checked him out and they couldn't find anything wrong with him. They sent him back to duty. He went back to the USS *Porter*.

JP: He had—but he had been shot.

HL: Well, he was in shock at the time, but he recovered from that and recovered well enough that they sent him back to duty on another ship. Then he came back to the *Solace* later on and the x-rays then revealed that that bullet was in his heart. A fellow by the name of Robert Ruhl was the x-ray technician [who] found that bullet in his heart.

JP: Do you remember how to spell Mr. Ruhl's last name?

HL: R-U-H-L. Robert Ruhl. And there again he was one of the pharmacist mate third class, but he's an x-ray technician. He was the one [who] found the bullet in his heart. They [decided] couldn't do anything, [so] they sent him back to Mare Island for surgery.

JP: Of course Mare Island is...

HL: In California, excuse me.

JP: Right, that's okay.

HL: Yeah, near San Francisco, Oakland, Vallejo, in that area. A surgeon by the name of C. C. Meyers removed the bullet from his heart, sewed him up. At that time, he agreed to talk to the nurse. He fell in love with the nurse who was taking care of him. Her name was Alice and he [*said*], "If I get through with this, will you marry me?"

And they did get married. And lived for fifty years. He died, after about fifty-two years later. I had [*the*] funeral for him up at Lakeport, [*California*].

JP: So you stayed in touch with him for all those years?

HL: Well, I didn't really, although he was in my chapter. I did not.

JP: And this was chapter number?

HL: Twenty-three, was his, located at Santa Rosa. That's headquarters for...

JP: Santa Rosa, California.

HL: Yes. Yes. When I came back from that load, I was told that I was needed aboard ship. At that time, they had brought [*many*] patients aboard ship I'd like to tell you about one patient, if I may do so.

JP: Please do.

HL: Because I think this is rather unusual. This man was on the USS *Curtiss*. And the USS *Curtiss* was on the other side of the island from us.

JP: Mm-hm.

HL: It was the only ship at Pearl Harbor that was hit by a kamikaze plane. The Japanese crashed the plane, it exploded on the ship. And this fellow was passing ammunition at the time in his skivvies. There [*were*] nineteen men killed and seventy-nine men injured.

JP: On the *Curtiss*.

HL: On the *Curtiss*. Well, the injured was brought to the *Solace*. This young fellow was brought to the *Solace*. I have here the only thing that was on him at the time, when he arrived to us. This is my souvenir of Pearl Harbor. His name was James T. Lackey.

JP: Can you spell his last name for us?

HL: L-A-C-K-E-Y. I doubt if you will be able to pick it up.

(Conversation off-mike)

HL: This was attached to his big toe. And the man...

JP: What is that, first of all?

HL: That's a really a shipping tag, the kind that goes along with a critically injured patient, or [*someone who is*] going to die. [*What is*] interesting about this—did you get that all right? This thing will give you something, give you an idea about this man.

He had received one-half grain of morphine sulfate and then another, within a half hour, [*then*] another one-half grain of morphine sulfate to put him out, take him out of his pain and suffering. A one-eighth grain is full dosage for morphine sulfate. He was burned all over his body except from his left knee to his hip. Serious burns from first, second, third degree burns. He was covered with tannic acid jelly, which

at that time was used to take care of burn patients. We found that that was a mistake, using tannic acid jelly. He was covered [*with it*] before we received him. He had a lot of shrapnel in his left shoulder, [*which*] we found after we removed the eschar or scab from him

When I came back, they said this man is your patient. I had him and one other man with a burn. They put him in a portion of the ward where he'd be away from everyone else because this burn area was such that in a few days, it was a horrible smell. Actually it was on the morning of the eighth that he came to. He [*had been*] unconscious at that time, there was a nurse by the name of Agnes Shur, and the medical doctor, and I think his name was [*C.C. Myers.*]

JP: Do you know the last, you know the spelling of the last name of the medical nurse?

HL: Shur, S-H-U-R. Agnes, she was the one in charge of the medical ward number two.

JP: And this was on the *Solace*?

HL: On the *Solace*. And the doctor's name, I'm sorry, it just slipped me right now. But he was one of the younger doctors. The first thing he said is that, "I hope I can be as good a man as my father."

Excuse me.

JP: That's okay. Take your time.

HL: So the doctor turned to me. The man went unconscious again and the doctor turned to me, [*and said*], "He's your patient." And he said, "Whether he lives or dies will depend on the kind of care you give him."

No one ever thought that a man burned from all over his body from [*the left knee*] to his hip would [*live.*]

JP: That's okay. That's a tremendous responsibility they placed on you.

HL: On the morning of the eighth, the doctors went through the ship and looked over all the serious patients and made recommendations and so forth. The recommendation that they made with him was to make him comfortable. That would indicate that he had no chance to live. I think there was eighteen doctors that went through and made those decisions. So it was quite a challenge to have this doctor tell me and I was foolish enough to think that with God's help I could do something for him.

He was in the bunk. We put a heat cradle over the top that fits over the top with thirty-two lights in it, because when your skin is all burned off, you have no control of your body temperature.

JP: So this was a heat [*cradle*]?

HL: Heat cradle.

JP: Heat cradle.

HL: C-R-A-D-L-E.

JP: Okay.

HL: [*Some*] time you'd have two lights on. Maybe the next time you have thirty-two lights on. It would depend on how much temperature heat [*he needed.*] We fed him intravenously. His medication was given that way and actually it's very hard to find the vessels to put the needles in. Because of this, in a short time, this kind of crust had started forming

an eschar or scab. He just turned black all over his body, from this scab. I had to remove that scab from his body and clean up the mess because there was inflammation underneath it. And so I literally skinned the man alive. You pull off a little and clean up the proud flesh. Then we did pin grafting. I stick a pin underneath this—this is his good skin. And then cut off a little piece of skin and apply it over here on proud flesh, put a saline compress over the top of it and in a few days, that skin will start to grow.

From that transplanting of skin from here to different parts of his body, he grew skin all over his body. And I will tell you, removing the eschar from his shoulder, I found that he had shrapnel in his shoulder. I pulled some of that out with tweezers and I said, “Do you want a souvenir?”

And he was a tough, little guy and he says, “No.” He said, “I carried it long enough. I don’t want any souvenirs.”

To begin with, I felt that I couldn’t do this without help from God. I was doing a lot of praying. When that young man woke up one time, he noticed I was praying. He says, “I’m an atheist.”

He was a seaman second class and I was a pharmacist mate third class. He [*said*], “I don’t believe in prayer.”

And I said, “Jim, you may not believe in prayer, but I believe in prayer and I know that I can’t do what I have to do [*to*] put you on your feet without God’s help. I will continue to pray for you because I need the help myself.”

He was a very tough little fellow, could take a lot of pain and suffering and I know that everything I did for him felt miserable. I was with him eight days without leaving him. I slept on the [*deck*] next to him. Because I had to control that temperature and take care of his needs. The guy



commenced to get a little better [*and*] stronger. He was a marvelous young fellow. I've never seen anyone that got injured as much as he was and still recover. He was the patient that was on the *Solace* the longest of any. He was on the *Solace* until the fifteenth of March in 1942, at which time he was ready to leave.

Now all this time that I was working on him, removing the eschar, taking care of the pin graft and the feeding. Sometimes we fed him through the soles of his feet, where you could find vessels [*where*] we could stick a needle. It was a tough go for him, but he did recover. He grew his skin back. We got him on his feet where he could walk. He looked kind of a mess, but when he left on the fifteenth of March in 1942, he shook hands with me. He [*said*], "Herb, I want to thank you for what you've done."

JP: I think...

HL: And that was the first time he ever said thank you. I thought he was kind of an ungrateful guy, but I had to admire him because he took so much and it was a terrible pain and suffering that he went through. He was shipped back to the States, discharged from the navy, went down to Corpus Christi, Texas, that's where he's from. And back to his family [*were*] he lived until 1959. I was always trying to find him, but I [*was not successful*]. I always felt I should give him back this souvenir that I took off his big toe. At the time of the reunion in Pearl Harbor in 1991, I ran across another man from the *Curtiss*. We were over in Hawaii and the man noticed [*my hat, and said*], "I see you are from the *Solace*."

I said, "Yes, I'm from the *Solace*."

"We know about the *Solace*." He said, "I was on the USS *Curtiss*."

I [*said*], "Yes, I know about one of your men," and I told him about this

James T. Lackey. He was seaman second class. And what a tough little

guy he was and how he made it [*when*] no one thought he was going to live.

He [*said*], if there's anyone [*who*] can find him, [*I can*], "I belong to the association and I'll locate him for you."

Later he found out that the same man was a member of the Masonic lodge. He found out through the Grand Lodge of Texas that the man joined the Corpus Christi lodge and [*then*] they told me the date that he [*died*] and I tell you this for one reason. They told me the date that he was initiated, passed and raised. Now, no man can join that Masonic lodge without expression and a belief in a supreme being. A year and a half after I got out of the service, I received a letter from him and he found my address through the navy. He sent the letter back to Fulton, Michigan, and he thanked me for saving his life and for introducing him to God. That letter was a real prized possession I had because [*of*] this man, I found out that although he said when I first met him, that he was an atheist and he didn't believe in prayer. But I kind of took advantage of him. While he was laying on his back, there's another bunk right above him. And so this old book, I'd open it out and I'd put it under the mattress on the bunk right above him. This is right above his eyes. The little guy didn't believe in prayer, didn't believe in God, and he had to read whatever, [*we written*] wrote there because it's right above his head. (Chuckles) And may not have been a proper thing to do, but I was a little bit tough. I was a mean pharmacist mate and he was a seaman and I was going to let him know something about what I believe.

JP: I think at that, we're going to finish there.

HL: All right.

JP: It's a wonderful story and thank you very much for sharing it with us.

HL: You're...

JP: And I think we'll end. Thank you.

HL: You're welcome. I'm sorry that I kind of broke down and took so much time, but that's part of...

JP: You did great.

END OF INTERVIEW